

TESTIMONY OF REP. MICHAEL D. BARNES ON LEGISLATION TO ESTABLISH  
COMPARABLE WORTH PAY EQUITY IN THE FEDERAL SERVICE

BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS

HOUSE POST OFFICE AND CIVIL SERVICE COMMITTEE

APRIL 3, 1984

I WOULD LIKE TO THANK THE CHAIR FOR THIS OPPORTUNITY TO TESTIFY ON BEHALF OF ESTABLISHING AND APPLYING THE PRINCIPLE OF COMPARABLE WORTH IN THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT. I WOULD ALSO LIKE TO COMMEND HER FOR HER STEADFAST PERSISTENCE IN KEEPING THIS MATTER AT THE FOREFRONT OF PUBLIC DEBATE.

SINCE 1964, THE LAWS OF OUR NATION HAVE REQUIRED EMPLOYERS, INCLUDING THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT, TO PROVIDE EQUAL PAY FOR EQUAL WORK FOR ALL EMPLOYEES. WE HAVE BEEN FIGHTING THIS BATTLE FOR TWENTY YEARS WITH SOME SUCCESS, BUT WE HAVE YET TO WIN A FINAL AND CONCLUSIVE VICTORY.

THE MATTER OF PAYING WOMEN THE SAME PAY AS MEN WHEN THEY PERFORM WORK THAT IS OF COMPARABLE VALUE TESTS OUR NATION'S WILLINGNESS TO FINISH THE TASK OF PROVIDING REAL ECONOMIC JUSTICE TO AMERICAN WOMEN. ESTABLISHING AND ENFORCING SUCH A STANDARD OF JUSTICE IS NOT MERELY THE RIGHT THE THING TO DO -- FROM THE STANDPOINT OF THE NATION'S ECONOMIC FUTURE AND OUR ABILITY TO REALIZE THE FULL POTENTIAL OF ALL AMERICAN WORKERS -- IT IS ALSO THE MOST REASONABLE THING TO DO.

THAT IS WHY I SHARE THE CHAIR'S VIEW THAT IT IS DEPLORABLE THAT THE CURRENT ADMINISTRATION HAS LAMELY COME BEFORE CONGRESS THROWING UP ITS HANDS BECAUSE IT CAN FIND NO REASONABLE STANDARD UPON WHICH TO ESTABLISH COMPARABLE WORTH.

THE CASE OF AFSCME V. THE STATE OF WASHINGTON CLEARLY DEMONSTRATES THAT THERE ARE WORKABLE STANDARDS IN THE REAL WORLD WHICH CAN BE UTILIZED TO ACHIEVE ECONOMIC JUSTICE. THIS ADMINISTRATION, NEVERTHELESS, TURNS A BLIND EYE TO WHAT WAS ACCOMPLISHED IN THAT CASE FOR THE SIMPLE REASON THAT IT BELIEVES THAT WAGE DISCRIMINATION IS PROFITABLE. DISCRIMINATION AT THE BOTTOM OF THE PAY SCALE DEPRESSES THE ENTIRE PAY SCALE.

THE COURTS, INDEED, HAVE BEEN SPLIT ON THE ISSUE OF WHETHER JOB EVALUATIONS CAN BE BASED ON LABOR MARKET FACTORS IN A NON-DISCRIMINATORY MANNER. THE COURT IN WASHINGTON STATE HAD THE COURAGE TO RECOGNIZE THAT THE SEEDS OF DISCRIMINATION ARE INHERENT IN CURRENT LABOR MARKETS. IF IT IS POSSIBLE TO COMPARE JOBS WITHOUT PARALLEL ELEMENTS BY A POINT-RATING SYSTEM OR OTHER MEANS, THEN IN MY VIEW, MEN AND WOMEN DOING JOBS OF COMPARABLE WORTH SHOULD BE PAID EQUALLY.

AS CHAIRMAN OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SERVICE TASK FORCE IN CONGRESS, I AM, AS YOU KNOW, DEEPLY COMMITTED TO MAINTAINING THE QUALITY OF THE FEDERAL SERVICE. I HAVE NO DOUBT THAT ESTABLISHING A STANDARD OF COMPARABLE WORTH FOR THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT WILL MARKEDLY IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF THE FEDERAL SERVICE FOR THE FOLLOWING REASONS:

- 1) IT WILL CREATE GREATER OPPORTUNITY FOR ADVANCEMENT; TOO MANY FEDERALLY EMPLOYED WOMEN HAVE BEEN PIGEON-HOLED IN LOW PAYING DEAD-END JOBS.

2) ONE OF THE MOST WASTEFUL FEATURES OF THE CURRENT FEDERAL SERVICE IS THE SAD FACT THAT PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT IS NOT EMPHASIZED AND ENCOURAGED. ELIMINATING DISCRIMINATORY PAY PRACTICES REMOVES A MAJOR TEMPTATION TO ACHIEVE SHORT-TERM SAVINGS AT THE EXPENSE OF SOUND MANAGEMENT PRACTICE.

3) RIFS, DOWNGRADINGS, REORGANIZATIONS AND OTHER FORMS OF STAFF UPHEAVAL IN RECENT YEARS HAVE FURTHER NARROWED OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN FOR ADVANCEMENT IN FEDERAL SERVICE. TAKING AFFIRMATIVE STEPS TO BREAK THE STRANGLEHOLD OF DISCRIMINATION ON THE PAY SIDE OF THE EQUATION WILL PROVIDE AN IMPORTANT BOOST TO THE MORALE OF BOTH MEN AND WOMEN.

IN SHORT, COMPARABLE WORTH WILL GIVE US A STRONGER FEDERAL SERVICE.

TWO FEDERAL AGENCIES, THE GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE AND THE OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT (OPM), HAVE ALREADY BEGUN TO TAKE THE IMPORTANT FIRST STEPS TOWARD FEDERAL PAY COMPARABILITY. THEY ARE DEVELOPING A "POINT-FACTOR" ANALYSIS SYSTEM FOR EVALUATING JOBS. THE OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT'S INTEREST, OF COURSE, STEMS MAINLY FROM A DESIRE TO REVIEW EXISTING EMPLOYEE CLASSIFICATIONS. OPM BELIEVES MOST FEDERAL JOBS ARE OVERGRADED, AND ITS EMPLOYEES OVERPAID.

IN MY VIEW, CLASSIFICATION PROBLEMS ARE A DIRECT RESULT OF THE GOVERNMENT'S INABILITY TO KEEP FEDERAL PAY SCALES IN LINE WITH PRIVATE SECTOR PAY. MANAGERS SEEKING TO RETAIN TOP EMPLOYEES HAVE ENGINEERED BETTER PAY FOR THEIR PEOPLE THROUGH THE CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM. WE SHOULD BE PARTICULARLY CAREFUL, AS I'M SURE THE CHAIR WILL AGREE, TO DEVELOP AN APPROACH TO THE ISSUE OF COMPARABLE WORTH THAT FULLY ACCOMODATES AN UPWARD RATHER THAN DOWNWARD ADJUSTMENT TOWARD PAY PARITY.

I WOULD STRONGLY URGE, THEREFORE, THAT "SAVE PAY" PROVISIONS BECOME INCORPORATED IN YOUR APPROACH.

ACCORDING TO THE PRESIDENT'S PAY AGENT, FEDERAL EMPLOYEES ARE ALREADY 21.5% BEHIND PRIVATE SECTOR PAY. IT WOULD BE INTERESTING TO KNOW JUST HOW MUCH FURTHER FEDERALLY EMPLOYED WOMEN LAG BEHIND THE AVERAGE PRIVATE SECTOR PAY FOR COMPARABLE WORK.

OUR EXPERIENCE WITH FEDERAL NON-SEX-BASED PAY COMPARABILITY ADJUSTMENTS SUGGESTS THAT WE MUST ALSO TAKE STEPS TO ENSURE THAT CONGRESS DOES NOT SUCCUMB TO THE POPULAR TACTIC OF BENDING COMPARABILITY TO MEET THE REQUIREMENTS OF FUTURE EXERCISES IN AUSTERITY. I WOULD HOPE THAT IN TACKLING THE THORNY ISSUE OF JOB COMPARABILITY WE COULD ALSO DISCOVER TECHNIQUES THAT WOULD HELP US BRING FEDERAL PAY UP TO PRIVATE STANDARDS.

THE STATISTICAL TOOLS DEVELOPED IN WASHINGTON STATE MAY HAVE GREAT PROMISE IN THIS REGARD.

I SINCERELY HOPE THAT THE ADMINISTRATION DROPS ITS PLAN TO INTERVENE IN THE WASHINGTON STATE CASE, BECAUSE ITS RECORD ON BEHALF OF BOTH WOMEN AND FEDERAL EMPLOYEES HAS BEEN ABYSMAL. BOTH GROUPS ARE EXPECTED TO EXCELL IN THEIR PERFORMANCE IN THE LABOR FORCE, BUT NEITHER IS GIVEN ENCOURAGEMENT OR ASSISTANCE. THE LEGISLATION BEFORE THIS COMMITTEE ADDRESSES BOTH OF THESE PROBLEMS AT ONCE.

IT'S TIME WE STOPPED PAYING WOMEN \$.59 FOR EVERY DOLLAR WE PAY MEN IN THE WORKFORCE. SIMILARLY, IT'S TIME WE STOPPED PAYING FEDERAL EMPLOYEES \$.79 FOR EVERY DOLLAR THAT A PRIVATE EMPLOYEE MAKES. IT'S TIME FOR ALL AMERICANS TO RECEIVE A DOLLAR'S PAY FOR A DOLLAR'S WORK.